

## Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 8th November, 2010

6.00 - 8.35 pm

<b>Attendees</b>	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Duncan Smith (Chairman), Barbara Driver, Wendy Flynn, Rowena Hay (Vice-Chair), Diggory Seacome, Charles Stewart, Jo Teakle, Jon Walklett and Simon Wheeler
<b>Co-optees:</b>	James Harrison and Karl Hemming
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Councillor Penny Hall, Councillor Klara Sudbury and Councillor John Webster (Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development) and Zareen Ahmed, Sarah Didcote, Richard Gibson, Sonia Phillips and Martin Stacy (Officers)

### Extract from the minutes

**1. APOLOGIES**

Cabinet Member Sport and Culture had given his apologies.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared.

**3. CHELTENHAM FESTIVALS JOINT WORKING GROUP**

The Chairman introduced the report which was circulated separately to the agenda.

He explained that the Cheltenham Festivals Joint Working Group (CFJWG) had been formed 18 months prior and members had included Councillors Smith and Hay (previously Rawson) from Social and Community and Councillors Barnes and Surgenor (previously Hutton) from Economy and Business Improvement, Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The initial meetings were side tracked somewhat by the tender exercise for a new Box Office system at the Town Hall. Given that it had now been resolved, the Chairman was unwilling to go into further detail regarding this.

The terms of reference (item 2.2 of the report) set out the remit of the CFJWG.

The Working Group had met 8 times, 3 of which were joint meetings with CF and the focus was their 3 year business plan, with a view to identifying any risks.

A series of issues were raised with CF in September 2010 (Appendix 2 of the report) and on the 29 October 2010, CF outlined their business plan to the CFJWG. Providing updated information specifically relating to projected growth targets, they discussed financial projections and how the plan would be implemented in detail. The plan forecast a breakeven year in 2011, followed by

2 years of growth. Members challenged various assumptions made by CF but were satisfied that the issues raised were answered satisfactorily. CF were confident that their projections were realistic.

A number of key issues were identified that needed to be resolved urgently in order to allow progress (item 3.7 of the report).

The Chairman referred members to the 6 recommendations of the CFJWG, noting that recommendation 5 was put forward as a request from CF rather than a recommendation of the Working Group.

The Chairman invited Councillor Hay to contribute as the other Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny representative on the CFJWG.

Councillor Hay felt it was important to note that CF had received one-off funding to enable the purchase of their box office software. This would have an impact on CBC revenue and she reiterated the need for Cabinet to be clear with CF about the financial implications of this decision.

Having been a Cabinet Member almost 5 years ago, she had quizzed CF on progress over this period. Both sponsorship and ticket sales had grown, but they were still some way from total independence.

She did note that item 5.6 of the report should be amended to clearly reflect recommendation 5.

The Chairman invited members of the committee to ask questions.

Councillor Driver stressed that the Chief Executive of CBC had recently met with the Friends of Montpellier Gardens and would soon be meeting with the Friends of Imperial Gardens. The message had been that, as part of a commissioning approach to services, these groups could be given the opportunity to take responsibility of management of these gardens. She urged Members and Officers involved in discussions about more flexible use of these gardens to involve such groups.

The following responses were given to questions from members of the committee;

- The loss of the box office commission as a result of CF having purchased their own system would have a negative impact of approximately £71k on the Borough Council, though more detailed analysis was required. There was also unknown levels risk associated to this given that they would be competitors. CBC were confident that the INFX software was suitable for both organisations, however CF concluded that their additional needs ruled this out. CBC were not in a position to consider CFs preferred software and as such the CFJWG supported the Cabinet Members' recommendation to purchase INFX as the most cost effective option for the Council.
- CBC were not in a position to tell CF when, how or what festivals to run. The Music Festival would reduce in days but not in the number of events next year and this offered scope for increased revenue. CF had assured the CFJWG that if the Jazz Festival were not to improve, it

would be stopped but members could not see why they would not consider merging it with the Music Festival.

- Whilst CF had requested that Cabinet consider delaying any reduction to their grant until 2012, they had not detailed what level of reduction they were expecting past 2011 and nor had they been asked to give that much detail.
- CF forecasts did build in large increases to sponsorship and CF had confirmed that they had some major new sponsors in the pipeline. The whole drive for more flexible use of the Gardens was based on wanting more space for sponsors. CF had commented that they were lucky to have use of the Town Hall but it wasn't working for them as a venue.
- Whilst CF had accepted that there would need to be a reduction in the grant from CBC they had asked that the Council consider that the Arts Council based their level of funding on the support received by the local authority.

The Chairman moved to consider the recommendations.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Festivals Working Group be endorsed and they be recommended to Cabinet and Cabinet note the comments made at this meeting when considering the following recommendations;**

- 1. A report be considered by Cabinet which outlines how more flexible and sustainable use of Imperial and Montpellier Gardens can be developed.**
- 2. A further review be undertaken of the existing Town Hall catering arrangements to ensure greater flexibility of use by Cheltenham Festivals. The original contract has been extended until August 2012.**
- 3. Cabinet ensures that Cheltenham Festivals are clear about the on-going financial impact regarding the use of their newly acquired Tessitura box office system.**
- 4. A joint strategic cultural plan for the town be developed as part of the 2011/2012 Corporate and Community Planning process.**
- 5. Cabinet consider delaying any reduction to the grant until 2012 as part of the budget setting process, following a request by Cheltenham Festivals.**
- 6. The appropriate monitoring arrangements be put in place which can be assessed by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny at regular intervals in the future as set out in 4.5 of the report.**